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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000645

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DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON

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SUBJECT: GULF OF GUINEA ENERGY SECURITY STRATEGY: MARCH
2008 MEETING

REF: ABUJA 643

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b
& d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The latest Gulf of Guinea Energy Security Strategy (GGESS) meeting was held March 24-25 in Abuja, hosted by the Government of Nigeria (GON). Presented as a joint GGESS/State Sustainable Development Strategy (SSDS) meeting, SSDS subject matter as presented by the Niger Delta governors the received pride of place at the session and the lion's share of the conference time. At this event, cobbled together in just a few weeks' time, it's not clear whether the GON wanted to prove that it was making progress in solving the protracted crisis in the Niger Delta since the July 2007 meeting in the Hague, or whether the session was just a show for international partners. Neither side got what they wanted, but there are some interesting developments since last summer. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) The March 24-25 meeting was attended by GON representatives, state governors and/or their representatives, Chiefs of Mission from GGESS partner nations, senior executives of international oil companies, development agency representatives, and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Babagana Kingibe, Secretary to the Federal Government, opened the meeting with

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some brief remarks assuring us the "Government was doing everything possible to achieve a peaceful solution to the challenges in the region." Presidential Envoy and General Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), A.L. Yar'Adua (no relation to the Nigerian President Umaru Yar'Adua), chaired the conference. The schedule was heavily dominated by presentations from the governors of the oil-producing states of Rivers, Delta, and Bayelsa, and the deputy governor of Akwa Ibom state, in which they presented their SSDS. There were also presentations by the oil industry, the Niger Delta Development Commission, NNPC, and the sub-working groups on Sustainable Development, Small Arms Control and Maritime Security, and Money Laundering.

THE STATES STEP UP, SORT OF...

13. (C) Under the umbrella of the SSDS, all four states presented extensive plans for development and financial accountability legislation. Their strategies described hundreds of projects big and small, focusing on building schools, creating microcredit plans, alleviating youth unemployment, and improving infrastructure. But woven into their schemes are a number of big-ticket items that could be unworkable and seem created to serve Delta elites: each state plans on building its own international airport, one wants a world-class hospital to promote medical tourism, and there is talk of creating scholarship programs to send students abroad. Absent were specifics on service delivery for basic schooling and health care, as well as benchmarks to measure progress on reaching their ambitious goals. It was obvious that, for all the talk of community-based development, the bulk of these plans were not vetted at the community level, but some such as youth training and job skills were. The general effect was to leave one wondering if even a fraction of these "sustainable" development projects would bring any improvement at all in the lives of the ordinary Nigerian in the Delta. Although based on the Ambassador's trip to Warri, some positive trade between Delta states could be improved with the large NDDC road project underway.

... AND FEDERAL LEADERSHIP IS NOWHERE IN SIGHT

14. (C) The overall structure and substance of the conference showed that the federal government does not see GGESS as a focal point but as a subplayer in its ideas and programs for the Delta. The conference itself seemed hastily thrown together; presentations from some GON agencies were largely

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non-substantive or showed little progress since last summer; and some sub-working groups had little to say. Senior GON representation was weak, with Secretary for the Government Kingibe putting in a 15 minute performance and the NNPC's Yar'Adua reportedly being so unfamiliar with the basic subject matter that a meeting with international partners just prior to the conference had to be postponed to give his staff time to brief him. Given that we have heard that he has been sidelined by the President for not being effective, it was not surprising that there was not a single mention of Vice President Goodluck Jonathan's efforts to resolve the Delta crisis, though he is supposed to head up GON efforts on the matter. In addition, the update on the Joint Task Force's progress and activities did not address key issues such as its complicity in oil bunkering. Indeed, much of the agenda seemed designed to simply fill out a two-day schedule.

15. (C) COMMENT: The Delta states have stepped into the vacuum left by the NDDC and NNPC not doing their jobs on development in the region. Some states are doing better than others, but much more needs to be done. At an April 1 follow-up meeting of some of the international partners, it was decided that some partners would try to meet with the NNPC's Yar'Adua to press him to clarify the GON's commitment to the process, give further details on where the police and military fit in future plans, and suggest that the NNPC create a full-time position dedicated to ensuring that progress is made in-between conferences. They will request Kingibe's presence at any such meeting. (Note: The Ambassador was not present at the April 1 meeting, but made clear we were only in a listening mode at that time regarding the GGESS. End note.)

16. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: There was also discussion of press reports the Yar'Adua administration is looking to create a new strategy; everyone agreed that this could only be a positive move, as perhaps the international partners could exert some influence as to what shape this new strategy could take, and in any event it's clear that the GON has its own idea as to what process should be in the lead on the Delta.

In the Ambassador's April 3 meeting with President Yar'Adua, he indicated that he saw GGESS as part of his own strategy on Gulf of Guinea security which also would include a Gulf of Guinea Guard Force (Reftel). END COMMENT.
SANDERS